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# HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

BEDFORD, N. H.,

DELIVERED SABBATH, JULY 2, 1876, BY THE PASTOR,

REV. IRA C. TYSON.

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PREPARED BY DIRECTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED  
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# DISCOURSE.

Ps. 102 : 18 :—“ This shall be written for the generation to come ; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.”

To gather up the records of the past and present, and faithfully transmit them to the future, is a duty which one generation owes to another. Especially is this true with reference to the history of God's people, whose experiences of faith afford an illustration of Divine grace and mercy.

The early struggles of the church of Christ in the new world, its growth and development amidst all the adversities through which it passed, its aspect as a moral and spiritual power in the land during this Centennial year, with the grand future which seems to open up before it, are points of ever-increasing interest as the lapse of time brings us nearer to the glorious consummation.

A general interest attaches to the history of the New England churches. In all the great cities of the West, and in every village and hamlet, are to be found the representatives of these old New England towns. To them, as well as to ourselves, the history of the church in which their early lot was cast, and within whose walls there cluster so many precious memories, must ever be a matter of absorbing interest. To gather up these recollections of the past, as connected with the Presbyterian church in Bedford, is the object we have at present especially in view. This task is the more pleasing from the fact, that in all its history this church has sustained an honorable record. Its early struggles, the blessings of Divine grace which have been visited upon it, along with the general character of its ministry, afford us material for the most pleasant retrospect, and

give us facts to make up a history which no church need wish to forget.

The Presbyterian church in Bedford claims a common origin with those who planted the venerable church in Londonderry, N. H. Although the date of its organization is a few years later, yet the most of the original settlers came direct from Londonderry to Bedford. In the original memorial to Governor Shute, of Massachusetts, dated 1718, wherein the memorialists, "Inhabitants of ye north of Ireland," requested encouragement to come to this country and settle, we find many names of those who were closely identified with the early history of this town. They trace their origin, therefore, back to Scotland, and to Scottish Presbyterianism. Their ancestors were the men who came from Argyleshire, in 1612, to the counties of Ulster, Antrim and Londonderry, in the north of Ireland, who were foremost in the memorable siege of Londonderry, by which the Papal restoration in England, under James the II, was successfully resisted; and who, having thus fought for their liberties, especially for the liberty to worship God, refused conformity to the Church Establishment, and chose rather to suffer the privations of a life in the wilderness than yield to the dictation of a persecuting hierarchy.

While the most of the early settlers of Bedford were thus of Scottish extraction, receiving the title of Scotch-Irish, because of their temporary residence in the north of Ireland, there was, also, a Puritanical element in the early settlement of the town. The government of Massachusetts, claiming jurisdiction over the province of New Hampshire, gave to the soldiers who fought in the Indian war of 1675, commonly known as the Narragansett war, grants of land in various places in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. These grants of land were numbered from one to seven. No. 5 comprehended all the territory of the present town of Bedford, with that portion of the town of Merrimack lying north of the Souhegan river and west of the Merrimack, with so much of Manchester as is embraced within the present limits of Piscataquog. These lines were altered at a more recent date.

The tract of land thus assigned to the Narragansett soldiers received the name of Souhegan East. A few of the original proprietors only became actual settlers, the others for the most part selling out their rights to those who were willing to enter and occupy the land. Those who came were mostly from towns in the vicinity of Boston, and were probably of Puritanic extraction. But the Scotch-Irish element, in a short time, largely predominated.

The Scotch-Irish and Puritans, however they may have differed in national characteristics, made common cause in religious principle. The same religious persecution which drove the Puritans from England, forced the Presbyterians of the north of Ireland to seek for freedom and independence in these western wilds. They were alike men of deep religious convictions, and made the service of God the principal business of life. It was because of these deep convictions that they were willing to give up the comforts and luxuries of civilized society, and endure the privations that are incident to the settlement of a new country. The very first duty to which they turned their attention was the building of a meeting-house and the settlement of an ordained ministry. To secure these privileges at the earliest opportunity, lands were set off in the original grant for the first minister who should settle among them, and other lands for the use of the ministry afterwards.

At that early day the idea of the church and state existing independently of each other, however it may have existed in the minds of some, had not been practically carried out to any extent. We find, therefore, that the business of the church, as well as that of the town, was all done in town-meeting. The town voted to build meeting houses, to support the Gospel, to call ministers, to apply for their dismissal, and everything else pertaining to the cause of religion. This may account for the fact that we have no sessional records of this church prior to the year 1804, or any other church records except those which are found in regular reports of the town.

The meeting of Narragansett grantees, at which they divided themselves into seven distinct societies, and assigned Souhegan East to No. 5, was held in Boston Common, June 6, 1733.

The Proprietors of No. 5 took immediate measures to have their land divided up into lots, for occupancy, and voted that each alternate lot should be marked for a settler. The land was then an unbroken wilderness; nor does it appear that there were any actual settlers in the town until the fall of 1737. The proprietors, however, continued to hold meetings in Boston, and in the winter of 1737-8, a number of settlers having taken up lands in the town, the question of building a meeting-house began to be discussed. At a Proprietors' meeting in February, 1738, a committee was chosen to fix upon the cost and dimensions of a meeting-house, and report. They even went so far at this meeting as to locate the proposed meeting-house, "on a knoll of common land, about 25 rods eastward of the 11th Range." Subsequently, the southern part of Souhegan East was set off to Merrimack, which necessitated the location of the meeting-house in another place. But the "knoll" referred to took the name of "Meeting-House Hill," and is so called to this day.

For the convenience of non-settlers the meetings of the Proprietors continued to be held in Boston at the house of Luke Verdy, inn-holder, and also at the house of Pelatiah Glover, sign of the "Three Horse Shoes." At these meetings the question of building a meeting-house continued to be earnestly discussed. Several times it was put to vote whether they should proceed to build, but each time negatived. The settlers were as yet few in number, their means limited, and the way did not appear to be open to begin the building of a meeting-house. Money, however, was raised for the purpose and placed in the hands of a building committee. The names of this committee were: Edward White, John Goffe and Moses Barron.

The settlers, however, were not altogether destitute of religious privileges. At several of the Proprietors' meetings, held from 1738 to 1748, they voted money to pay for preaching, appointed committees to secure the same, and named the places where preaching services should be held. The sums thus raised provided for only a part of the time; the rest of the year they were accustomed to go to Londonderry, a distance of twelve

miles, crossing the Merrimack river at Goffe's Falls, and performing the journey, many of them, on foot.

The first Presbytery in New England was organized at Londonderry, April 16, 1745. It was called "The Presbytery of Boston." It was composed of Rev. John Moorhead, of the Federal-street Presbyterian church, Boston; Rev. Robert Abercrombie, of Pelham, N. H., and Rev. David McGregore, of Londonderry, with the congregations under their charge. The elders who met with them were: James McKean, Alexander Conkey and James Heughs. They voted "To act so far as their present circumstances would permit them, according to the word of God and constitution of the Presbyterian church of Scotland, agreeing with that perfect Rule." At a meeting held in Boston, 1746, this Presbytery licensed its first candidate to preach the Gospel. His name was Daniel Mitchell, a native of the north of Ireland, and a graduate of the University of Edinburgh.

At a meeting of the Presbytery of Boston, held in Boston, November 11, 1747, we find the first reference to Souhegan East. The following is the minute upon the records of Presbytery:

"Upon application made by Andrew Cochran, in ye name of the Inhabitants of Souheggen and Litchfield, for Mr. Mitchell to supply them for a time, the Presbytery appointed him to supply them until the second Sabbath of March next."

At a meeting held in Pelham, June 14, 1748, Mr. Mitchell reported, "that he had obeyed the appointment of Presbytery and their committee."

There were, doubtless, other men who supplied them before this, but Mr. Mitchell's name is the first which appears in any of the records, certainly the first sent them by the Presbytery. In their application we observe their attachment to Presbyterian order, and their desire to secure the institutions of religion among them. Mr. Mitchell was afterward settled over the Presbyterian church at Pembroke, N. H., and died Dec. 16, 1776.

At the same meeting of Presbytery at which Mr. Mitchell re-

ported, Pelham, June 14, 1748, another petition for supply was made from "Swaheggen." At the same meeting Rev. David McGregore presented the name of Mr. Alexander Boyd, a young man of a liberal education. He produced certificate of his attending the study of Divinity at the University of Glasgow, and having submitted to a thorough examination, and subscribed to the Confession of Faith, he was licensed to preach the Gospel.

At the next meeting of Presbytery, Londonderry, October 4, 1748, "Presbytery thought proper that Mr. Boyd should supply Kingstown the next three Sabbaths and then immediately after four Sabbaths to Litchfield and *Swaheggen*." It would appear from a subsequent minute that Mr. Boyd, having received a call to Kingstown, did not fulfill his other appointments.

The date of the ecclesiastical organization of the church in Bedford has long been a matter of doubt. It is not given in any of the town records, nor does it appear in our published Town History, except the general statement, p. 140, that it was organized by the Boston Presbytery. The recent recovery of a portion of the old records of this Presbytery enables us to fix the exact date of organization, and I here insert the minute in full, as a most important fact for future preservation.

The Presbytery of Boston met in Boston *August Fifteenth, Seventeen Hundred and Forty-Nine*. The members present were, Rev. John Moorhead, Boston; Rev. Jonathan Parsons, Newbury; Rev. David McGregore, Londonderry; Rev. Robert Abercrombie, Pelham. Elders: Richard MacCleur, Ralph Cross, John Craig. Mr. Abercrombie presided as moderator. In the proceedings of this meeting appears the following minute:

"Mr. Patten appeared as Commissioner from Souhegan, presenting a memorial, wherein that people acknowledge their subjection to the Presbytery, and petition for supply."

Thus we learn that nine months before the incorporation of the town, and while the settlers were yet destitute of a place of worship, they made application and were received under the care of Presbytery, and became a regular Presbyterian church. Their meetings for worship were held in different parts of the

town and in private houses. The Mr. Patten referred to was probably Samuel Patten, as he, with Moses Barren and Thomas Vicary, were appointed a committee at the Proprietors' meeting to provide preaching that year. The Presbytery held another meeting at Londonderry in October, of the same year. Souhegan again petitioned for supplies, and "Mr. Boyd was appointed to supply Litchfield two Sabbaths, *Souhegan* two, and Suncook one."

The settlers, being desirous of securing more effective measures for supporting the Gospel, and for their better government as a people, now petitioned the Governor of the Province, Benning Wentworth, Esq., for an act of incorporation, giving as a particular reason for the petition that, "having been long destitute of the Gospel, we are now desirous of taking the proper steps in order to have it settled among us." They also stated that, "your petitioners as to our particular persuasion in Christianity, are generally of the Presbyterian denomination," and they wished the Gospel settled among them "in that way of discipline which they judged to tend most to their edification." Governor Wentworth laid the petition before the council and on the nineteenth of May, 1750, the act of incorporation was passed, the district vested with town privileges, and the place named BEDFORD.

Mr. Boyd having fulfilled his appointment of the preceding October, Presbytery again appointed him on the 5th of June, 1750, in accordance with petitions offered for supplies, "to preach ten Sabbaths at *Souhegan*, Suncook and Litchfield."

In the meantime the inhabitants of the town of Bedford, acting in the spirit and intent of their petition for incorporation, at once called a legal meeting and took measures to secure a settled ministry. The first meeting after incorporation assembled June 6, 1750, in Matthew Patten's house, and thence adjourned to his barn. Here it was voted that the minister be entertained at Samuel Patten's, at the charge of the town. On July 3d they voted £150 old tenor for preaching during the year, and on the 7th of August, 1750, "Voted there be a call given to Rev. Mr. Alexander Boyd to the work of the ministry

of this town," with a salary of £300 old tenor, if he would accept. Capt. John Goffe, Dea. John Orr and Mr. Hugh Riddle were appointed a committee to prosecute the call to the Presbytery. It is doubtful whether this call was ever formally presented to Mr. Boyd. I find no record of it in the proceedings of Presbytery and an article in the town warrant, called for January 21st, of the following year, was, "To inquire what is the reason why the committee for providing preaching to the town, are so negligent in that business." It is probable these brethren had good reason for their "neglect," as Mr. Boyd had been "sharply rebuked" by his Presbytery for effecting a clandestine marriage before leaving Glasgow, and passing himself in this country for an unmarried man. The Presbytery, however, continued his appointments, on his making a full acknowledgment, expressing his sorrow and promising to adhere to her as his wife. This acknowledgment was unsatisfactory, and Mr. Boyd was afterward summoned before a committee of Presbytery to account for his conduct. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that negotiations for his settlement in Bedford were at once terminated.

The question of building a meeting-house now began to be agitated anew, and at a town meeting January 24, 1750, a committee was chosen for the purpose. Considerable difficulty arose as to the location of the meeting-house, the choice lying between the east or west end of what was known as the Bell hill, immediately south of what is now the centre of the town. Not being able to agree they summoned three friends from Londonderry to decide the question for them. This committee chose the east of the hill, but their decision was equally unsatisfactory. The building committee proceeded to prepare the timber for the meeting-house, and finally, having abandoned both ends of Bell hill, at a town meeting held September 26, 1755, it was voted unanimously to locate the meeting-house on land bought for the purpose, being part of No. 13 and 14 in the Tenth Range. Here the meeting-house was afterwards built.

In the meantime the people continued their efforts to secure a settled ministry. At a meeting of Presbytery in Boston, 1751,



application was received from "Bedford *alias* Souhegan," for a supply at discretion. At another meeting in Boston, August 13, 1751, "Received a supplication from Bedford, pleading for a supply." At a meeting of Presbytery at Londonderry, October 29, 1752, supplications were received from Palmer District, Canterbury, Colrain, N. Rutland, Litchfield, Derryfield, *Bedford* and Suncook. At this meeting Mr. Alexander MacDowell, a licentiate of Presbytery, was appointed to supply a part of the the time at "*Bedford*, Litchfield, Derryfield and Suncook." Mr. MacDowell fulfilled his appointments with reference to Derryfield and Bedford, both places giving him a call, the people of Derryfield proposing to unite with Bedford in having him settled over the two places. An article was put in the town warrant to see if they would unite with Derryfield in this call. On the 28th of March, 1753, the town voted not to join with Derryfield, and at the same meeting voted a unanimous call to Mr. McDowell, with £100 old tenor if he accept, and a committee appointed to prosecute the call to Presbytery. In July of the same year another committee was chosen "to prosecute the call for Mr. MacDowell to the 'Rev'd. Presbytery,' and to procure preaching till the next annual meeting." Mr. MacDowell, however, did not accept the call.

Mr. Samuel MacClintock was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of Boston, October 29, 1752. On the 14th of August, 1753, Mr. MacClintock was directed by Presbytery to supply half the time at Bedford, the other half at Litchfield, Derryfield and Suncook, till next meeting. This appointment was renewed on the following November, and his labors in Bedford gave evident satisfaction. At a town meeting October 1st, 1754, it was voted unanimously, "to give Mr. Samuel MacClintock a call to the work of the ministry in the town of Bedford." On the following January Presbytery renewed its appointment of Mr. MacClintock to supply Bedford, in connection with Windham, Litchfield, Derryfield and Suncook. The people seem to have been very anxious to secure the services of Mr. MacClintock. They voted him £107, 10s. new tenor for his yearly stipend, took measures to lay a tax upon the unimproved

land in the town to build him a house, and agreed to cut twenty cords of wood annually for five years, and draw it to his house, if he would accept. They also appointed Samuel Patten a Commissioner to prosecute the call to the Presbytery. At a meeting of Presbytery, August 22d, 1754, held at Newbury, appears this minute :

“The people of Bedford having sent a Petition to ye Presbytery requesting them to send one or more of their number some convenient time between this and next meeting to moderate in a call to Mr. Samuel MacClintock, the Presbytery thereupon appointed Mr. MacGregore to perform that piece of service.”

At the same meeting they voted that, “Bedford shall have their proportion of time wholly in Mr. MacClintock.” The following November this appointment was renewed.

Mr. MacClintock did not accept this call, but negotiations with him continued. At a town meeting May 6th, 1756, it was voted to renew the call made to him previously, at the same annual stipend, with this additional inducement, that he should have nine Sabbaths to his own use during each year, till the town should feel able to pay him for all or a part of those nine Sabbaths, for which they would allow him ten pounds old tenor per Sabbath.

The people of Bedford were not mistaken as to the character of the man whom they thus desired to settle over them. Mr. MacClintock afterwards became one of the honored members of the New Hampshire ministry. He was graduated at Princeton, 1751, settled at Greenland, N. H., 1756, served as chaplain in the army during the Revolutionary war, admitted to an *ad eundem* Master's degree at Harvard, 1761, received the title of D.D. at Yale, 1791, and after a ministry of 48 years at Greenland, died there in 1804.

During the time of these unsuccessful efforts to secure a settled ministry, the work on the meeting-house continued slowly. The carpenters who did the work complained that they were losing money on it, and the town voted them thirty pounds old tenor additional. At length the work had so far progressed

that the town meeting, which had been previously held in barns, was called to assemble "at the meeting-house frame," April 21, 1756. The accommodations, however, seem to have been unsatisfactory, as they continued to assemble in barns for some time afterward.

REV. JOHN HOUSTON, the first settled pastor of the Presbyterian church in Bedford, was born in Londonderry, N. H., in —, 1723. The family belonged to the old Scotch-Irish stock, the name of Robert Houston appearing in the memorial addressed to Gov. Shute in 1718. Mr. Houston was educated in the College of New Jersey, which was then located at Newark,\* and graduated in 1753. Rev. Aaron Burr (father of the Vice-President of the United States), was then President of the College, and gave to Mr. Houston, on his leaving college, the following letter, which is still extant, and written in a clear, bold hand :

"This may certify all concerned, that Mr. John Houston has for some time been a member of New Jersey College, and sound in communion with ye church of Christ in this place, and behaved himself according to the Rules of the Gospel.

A. BURR, Ps'd.

Sept. 28, 1753."

On his return to Londonderry Mr. Houston studied Divinity under Rev. David McGregore, and having placed himself under the care of Presbytery, parts of trial were assigned him, with a view to licensure. The subject of his Latin exegesis was: "*An Dei Beneplacitum sit solum electionis fundamen.*" A homily on 1 John: 4, 18. After having been examined in systematic and experimental Divinity, and branches of humane literature, and subscribed to the formula, he was, May 14, 1754, licensed to preach the Gospel, being then about thirty-one years of age. The examination was creditable to Mr. Houston, his classical and theological learning being above the average. Presbytery made a minute of the fact that he had received the honors of the College at Newark. Mr. Houston was immediately appointed to supply one Sabbath each at Windham, Bedford, Suncook and Nottingham, and afterwards two days at a time at Windham and Bedford.

\* Removed to Princeton in 1756.

The negotiations with Mr. MacClintock having failed, the people now turned their attention to Mr. Houston, and at a town meeting August 5, 1756, it was "voted unanimously, to give Mr. John Houston a call to the work of the ministry in this town." A committee was appointed to treat with him. At an adjourned meeting August 7th, it was voted to give him "six hundred pounds old tenor, or new tenor equal thereto;" but this vote was on the 30th of the month reconsidered and it was finally agreed to give him "equal to forty pounds sterling in old tenor, as the law shall fix the rate of dollars or sterling money, and that what number of Sabbath days they should think themselves unable to pay he should have to his own use deducted out of the aforesaid sum." It was also ordered that the committee should agree with Mr. McGregor to moderate in a call, should Mr. Houston accept.

The work on the meeting-house still went on slowly. Special committees were appointed, one to "shingle and board it," another to procure sashes and put them in, another to underpin, and another still to lay the floors and make the doors and window frames. There was no contract work—all had to be done by committee, and sometimes the committees refusing to serve, others had to be appointed, which caused much delay, and must have been vexatious. But however slow the progress, they paid as they went, and thus avoided the burden of a debt.

The winter of '56 wore along, and it was still uncertain whether Mr. Houston would accept his call; the town appointed other committees to procure preaching. At length, however, Mr. Houston signified his acceptance of the call, and in July of 1757 "forty pounds" were voted to defray the charges of the ordination.

Mr. Houston was ordained as pastor of the church of Bedford on the 28th of September, 1757. The ordination sermon was preached by Rev. Jonathan Parsons, of Newbury, from 1 Timothy: 1, 2. Rev. David McGregor gave the charge, and other ministers took part in the services. From Matthew Patten's journal we learn that the text of Mr. Houston's first sermon after his ordination was, "Fear not, little flock, it is your

Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." "Very appropriate," says Mr. Savage, "as it must have been a small church in the midst of the wilderness."

On his settlement, Mr. Houston, as first pastor, according to the provision of the original proprietors, came into possession of certain lands in the town. The people of Merrimack having then no settled ministry, and being, many of them, of the Presbyterian persuasion, attended worship in Bedford. This was somewhat inconvenient, and in 1758 the town voted to allow the the people of Merrimack who paid rates to support the Gospel in Bedford, "so many Sabbath days of our Rev'd Pastor's time, for public worship, to be held at John Burns', as they pay in proportion with us toward his annual salary for the present year, if our Rev'd pastor be willing."

The details of Mr. Houston's ministry are such as were common to the New England ministry of that time. There were many hardships, incident to the building up of a church in a new country, but he addressed himself to the work with zeal and energy, and during his pastorate the church gradually increased in strength and influence. He gave especial attention to catechetical instruction, and was much interested in the young people of his charge. He was conscientious and earnest in his piety, devoted to the cause of his Master, and labored earnestly for the spiritual welfare of the people under his charge. During the earlier years of his ministry he seems to have enjoyed the respect and confidence of his people, and was happy in his relations with them. But at the beginning of the Revolutionary war general dissatisfaction arose against him, because of his adherence to the cause of the mother country. In taking this position Mr. Houston was undoubtedly conscientious, and acted in accordance with what he believed to be the will of God in the matter. Time has sufficiently demonstrated that he erred in judgment. But we who are removed from those scenes of intense excitement can afford to impute to him only such motives as were dictated by what he understood as his duty in the matter. In giving a faithful record of the facts as they occurred, it is due to the memory of one who, in all other respects, bore

an irreproachable character, to regard this great mistake of his life as resulting from an error of the head and not of the heart.

The first intimation we have of a feeling of disaffection of the people of Bedford against their pastor, appears in a call for a town meeting, dated May 2d, 1775. It was immediately after the news of the battle of Lexington, and the excitement of the people throughout New England was at the highest pitch. The article in the warrant was, "To see what method the town will take relating to Rev. John Houston, in these troublesome times, as we apprehend his praying and preaching to be calculated to intimidate the minds of his hearers, and to weaken their hands in defence of their just rights and liberties, as there seems a plan to be laid by Parliament to destroy both." The meeting, which was called for the 16th of May, voted to shut the doors of the church against the pastor, and to stop the payment of his salary till he should come to a sense of his duty. Mr. Houston made a statement of his position to the town, but it was declared to be unsatisfactory.

On the 15th of June, 1775, the town voted his dismissal, and adopted a strong resolution condemning his course.

As Presbyterians, however, they recognized the fact that he was still pastor of the church. It had been the practice in former years to vote him a certain number of Sabbaths to himself, ranging from four to ten. At the meeting of March 27th, 1776, they voted him *the whole year* to his own use. In the meantime they requested him to join with them in their application to Presbytery for a dissolution of the pastoral relation, and a committee was appointed for that purpose.

At the formation of the Synod of New England, at Seabrook, N. H., May 31, 1775, three Presbyteries were constituted out of the old Boston Presbytery, namely: the Eastern, or Presbytery of Salem; the Middle, or Presbytery of Londonderry; and Western, or Presbytery of Palmer. On the division of these Presbyteries Mr. Houston and his congregation were united to the Presbytery of Palmer, and he was directed by Synod to convene the new Presbytery and moderate the first meeting. The position he had taken on the state of the country, however, had

rendered him unpopular with his ministerial brethren, and the unfriendliness resulting therefrom led him to omit the duty assigned him by Synod. Thereupon the Synod directed the Rev. Moses Baldwin, of Kingston, to act in his stead, and Mr. Houston, having promised that he would satisfy both the civil authority and the Synod for the course he had taken, was recommended to bring the evidence of such satisfaction to his Presbytery, and through them to the Synod. This action was taken in September, 1776, more than a year after his dismissal by the act of the town, and while he was as yet ecclesiastically, although not practically, pastor of the church.

The Synod met at Londonderry, September 3, 1777. At this meeting a committee from Bedford appeared, and asked the advice of Synod respecting their troubles with their pastor. Mr. Houston being present was interrogated as to his promise to give satisfaction to Synod respecting his conduct. It appearing that he had not done so, he was deemed guilty of a breach of promise and contempt of Synod, and deprived of his seat in the body until he should give satisfaction to the Synod for his conduct, either directly or through his Presbytery. The committee from Bedford was also directed to bring the matter of their grievances before their Presbytery, in the regular way.

The following year, September 3, 1778, at Londonderry, the Synod re-affirmed its action respecting Mr. Houston, declaring his contempt of Synod to be highly blameable, but promised to recommend him to the churches as a member in good standing on his compliance with their requisition. At this meeting of Synod, Bedford congregation and Mr. Houston were annexed to the Presbytery of Londonderry, and that Presbytery was directed to take cognizance of their affairs. Before the adjournment of the meeting, however, the troubles in Bedford again came up for discussion, and both parties agreeing, the Synod passed the following resolution :

*“Whereas, There appears to be a dissatisfaction among the people of Bedford relative to the Rev. Mr. Houston, whereby he is not likely to be useful among them in the ministry, by consent of both parties, this Synod do dissolve his pastoral relation to said congregation.”*

Mr. Houston is described as having been of a stern and inflexible disposition, but the progress of the war, coupled with the almost universal condemnation of his countrymen, led him, subsequently, to modify his position. He had stood out in defence of his views to the point of surrendering his pastoral charge, and losing his standing in the Synod. But now, being left free to act according to his own will, he appeared before the authorities of the state and took the oath of allegiance, of which the following is a copy :

“ State of New }  
Hampshire: } In committee of Safety, October 28th, 1778.

This may certify all persons that the Rev. John Houston has taken the oath of allegiance and fidelity to this, and the United States of America.

Attest: M. WEARE, Chairman.”

At the meeting of Synod, at Windham, the following year, September 15, 1779, Mr. Houston's name appears on the roll of Synod, and also the following minute, in the record of its proceedings :

“ A report being given by Mr. Stickland and Mr. Williams, that the Rev. Mr. Houston brought from the State of New Hampshire a testimonial satisfactory to this Synod, do now restore him to full standing with this body.”

Mr. Houston's name appeared on the roll of Synod up till the time of its dissolution, 1782. He remained in connection with the Presbytery of Salem, which succeeded the Synod, until 1785, when, in June of that year, at a meeting in Sylvester, the Presbytery gave him the following letter of dismissal and recommendation : “ Voted unanimously, that the Rev. John Houston (agreeable to his petition to us), be dismissed from this body, and recommended to the churches wherever God in his Providence may call him.” He afterwards united with the Associate Presbytery.

Mr. Houston continued his residence in Bedford, preaching as he had opportunity, and making, occasionally, what might be called missionary tours into northern New Hampshire and Vermont. He died February 3d, 1798, aged 75 years.

From the time of Mr. Houston's dismissal, 1778, until 1804,



a period of twenty-six years, the church was without a stated pastor. How it survived this long period without the stated preaching of the Gospel, it is difficult now to understand. The whole period is almost a total blank with respect to any matters of historical interest. The names of Benjamin Smith and James Little (Elders), occasionally appear on the rolls of Presbytery and Synod as delegates from Bedford.

In the records of the town we find that a certain sum of money was voted annually to provide preaching. Rev. William Pickles, a native of Wales, and a man of considerable pulpit power, supplied them stately about two years, from 1787 to 1789, but aside from this there was no regular preaching in the town. During this long period of destitution the church members became much scattered, and there was almost no spirituality in the church. No revivals of religion are recorded, and it would seem that there had as yet been no general religious interest in the church from the beginning of its history, although there were, undoubtedly, some conversions under the ministry of Mr. Houston. Towards the close of the century there were decided indications of a desire to secure again a settled ministry. It was voted in town meeting that the money appropriated for preaching should be used only for those who would come as candidates; and the committees appointed to secure the same were desired to apply to Presbytery for supplies in a regular way. Early in the beginning of the century six new elders were appointed to serve with those already in office, and Rev. Mr. Morrison, of Londonderry, was invited to ordain them and administer the Lord's Supper.

March 6, 1804, the town voted a call to the Rev. David McGregore, of Londonderry, and in May of the following year Mr. McGregore accepted the same.

On the 5th of September, 1804, Rev. DAVID MCGREGORE was ordained and installed pastor of the church in Bedford, by the Presbytery of Londonderry, Rev. Dr. Morrison, of Londonderry, preaching the sermon.

Mr. McGregore completed his collegiate course at Dartmouth College, in 1799, and studied for the ministry under Dr. Mor-

rison. Upon his settlement in Bedford the affairs of the church assumed altogether a more favorable aspect. Meetings of session were recorded and delegates regularly chosen to attend meetings of Presbytery. In 1806 a regular system of ministerial visitation was inaugurated, in which the elders alternately accompanied the minister. Numbers were added to the church from time to time, and church discipline was more strictly observed. The year 1818 was marked by a state of general religious interest, and during the year twenty-two persons were received into communion with the church.

Mr. McGregore was a man of superior social qualities, and commanded the respect of his congregation, as well as of his brethren in the ministry. Many of those who united with the church under his preaching became eminent for usefulness, remaining firm in their attachment to the cause of the Master to the end of life. A few of them survive to the present day, and still bear witness to the earnest gospel preaching and ministerial fidelity of the pastor through whom they were converted to Christ.

During the earlier part of his ministry, Mr. McGregore labored as a missionary in connection with the N. H. Domestic Missionary Society, extending his tours into the northern section of the State. His labors were blest in the awakening of considerable religious interest in the places where he preached.

The relations of Mr. McGregore with the people of his charge were marked by harmony and good will throughout. During his ministry the church increased in strength and influence, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper were regularly and more frequently administered, and the general tone of morals and religion improved. He was a man of sound doctrinal views, and of good pulpit ability. His sermons, some of which are still extant in manuscript, evince a logical mind and a diligent study of the Holy Scriptures. He is spoken of as having faithfully preached the Gospel, enforcing the practical duties of religion with great fidelity.

In April, 1825, Mr. McGregore apprised his church of his desire for a dissolution of the pastoral relation, and requested them to unite with him in application to Presbytery for the same.

Accordingly, the Londonderry Presbytery, at its meeting at Nottingham-West, (now Hudson,) on the last Wednesday in April, 1826, dissolved the pastoral relation between Mr. McGregor and the church in Bedford. Mr. McGregor removed to Falmouth, in Maine, in 1831, and died there October 18th, 1845, aged 74. He was the nephew of Rev. David McGregor, and great-grandson of Rev. James McGregor, the first minister of Londonderry. His pastorate continued twenty-one years, as did that of Mr. Houston.

About the time of M. McGregor's dismissal a "Presbyterian Society" was formed in the town, in accordance with the laws of the State, and to it the general affairs of the church were committed. While, therefore, the town negotiated with Mr. McGregor on the terms of his dismissal, nothing appears in the records with regard to the call of his successor.

On the 5th of July, 1826, Rev. THOMAS SAVAGE was installed pastor of the Presbyterian church in Bedford, by the Presbytery of Londonderry, being its third settled minister. The sermon on the occasion was preached by the Rev. Dr. Whiton, of Antrim, N. H.

Mr. Savage was born in Boston, September 2d, 1793. He prepared for college at Phillips' Academy, Andover, and graduated at Harvard in 1813, the eleventh of his family who had graduated at that institution. Having pursued the study of theology for three years, at Cambridge, he accepted an invitation to become a private tutor in Louisiana. About this time he experienced a change of views with respect to the system of theology he had adopted, and finished his preparation under the care of the Mississippi Presbytery. By that body he was ordained to the work of the ministry in 1822, and preached two years at Baton Rouge.

Returning north in 1824 he supplied the pulpit of Dr. Codman, of Dorchester, for one year, during his absence, and immediately after received his first invitation to preach in this town.

Mr. Savage entered upon his life-work here under very encouraging circumstances. He was young, vigorous, finely educated, and fully imbued with the spirit and energy needed for

his work. He was earnest in his piety, remarkable for the urbanity of his manners, and for the genial kindness of his disposition. He was, withal, an eloquent preacher, possessing superior pulpit address and power, and soon won to himself the affection of his people, the esteem of his ministerial brethren, and the respect and confidence of the people of that part of the State where, during his long pastorate, his name became the synonym, not of what it literally imported, but of those virtues which are the embodiment of a perfect Christian gentleman. Politeness—genuine Christian politeness—was, in fact, his distinguishing characteristic. To a temperament naturally genial, were added the refinements of education, and the graces of the Christian life, making him, says Dr. Wallace, in his memorial discourse, “a model for the young, a pattern for the Christian, and an example to be imitated by that profession to which he was an ornament.”

In the freshness and vigor of his early life Mr. Savage devoted himself to the work of the ministry, and the results of his labors were soon apparent. He immediately brought to the attention of the session the duty of systematic visitation, and a plan was adopted that had for its object “a revival of religion,” by bringing the question personally to the attention of all. The town was divided up into districts, and committees of visitation appointed to go from house to house, pledging themselves “unitedly to engage in the work, immediately to go about it, and not to grow cold or weary in it.” The Sabbath-school, which had been previously held in school-houses, without much interest, was now transferred to the church and held during intervals of Divine service, with happy effects. On the 11th of October, 1827, a Thursday afternoon prayer meeting was commenced, which has continued without interruption until the present day, now almost fifty years. In 1829 a Temperance Reform began and a Temperance Society was formed, through the joint influence of Mr. Savage and a temperance discourse delivered by Dr. Justin Edwards. The result of this movement was, that whereas seven places were licensed in the town during 1829, by the selectmen, for the sale of ardent spirits, only two were licensed the following year.

These Christian efforts were ordered, in the Providence of God, as preliminary to that wonderful work of grace which swept over the country in 1831. The church in Bedford was partaker, to a large degree, in that revival season, and accessions were made at that time which have had a lasting influence upon the church and the world. At the May communion of that year, 5 were added on profession of faith; in September, 91; and the following January, 17, making 113 in all. This was certainly a most encouraging result for the young pastor, and for a country church it certainly evinces a work of no ordinary magnitude. Many of those brought into the church at that time became bright and shining lights in the world; nearly all of them continued to adorn the Christian profession to the end of life, and some still survive to attest to the present generation the genuine nature of the work of divine grace in their hearts.

It was during this revival year that the question of building a new meeting-house first took definite shape. The old building had stood and served its purpose for a period of 75 years, and was now too small and inconvenient to meet the wants of the growing congregation. During the year 1831 subscriptions were started and an association formed for building a meeting-house. The building was finished during the following year, and on Christmas day, December 25, 1832, the house in which we now worship was solemnly dedicated to the worship of Almighty God.

In the succeeding years Mr. Savage continued to enjoy the confidence of his people, and accessions were yearly made to the membership of the church, as fruits of his ministry. In an historical discourse prepared and published during 1841, he reported that 272 had been added to the church on profession since his settlement, being an average of 18 per year.

On the 19th of May, 1850, the town celebrated the Centennial anniversary of its incorporation. It was a great day for Bedford. Many distinguished visitors, former residents of the town, and others, were present. It was estimated that about 2000 persons participated in the festivities. The Hon. Isaac O. Barnes, of Boston, a native of Bedford, delivered the Centen-

nial address. A History of the town—the joint work of Rev. Mr. Savage, Dr. P. P. Woodbury, and Mr. William Patten, was published, embracing most of the facts of interest connected with the town history up to that date. It was the result of great labor and is an unusually interesting book of its kind.

Once more, near the close of his ministry, Mr. Savage was permitted to witness the Divine approval of his labors in a revival of religion. In 1864 a revival began in Manchester, in connection with the preaching of the Evangelist, Rev. A. B. Earle. The work extended to Bedford. Special meetings were held, and a deep and general interest prevailed. As a result, 72 persons united with the church during the year, on profession of faith.

On the 3d of January, 1866, the pastoral relation between the Rev. Thomas Savage and the church in Bedford was dissolved by the Presbytery of Londonderry. The pastorate of Mr. Savage extended over a period of nearly forty years, and embraced the most important period of the church's history. He had succeeded in binding the church together in harmonious action in all Christian work, and bringing it forward to rank with the strong churches in the state. His pastorate, on the whole, was eminently successful, and the influence of his labors will long be felt upon the cause of religion in this community.

Mr. Savage did not long survive the termination of his pastorate. He died on the 8th of May, 1866, aged 72 years.

“As a preacher,” says Dr. Wallace, “Mr. Savage was practical and impressive. He did not dwell so much on the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel, as many preachers. He did not preach theology as a system. Yet he preached salvation only by the cross. But its doctrines were mingled with precept as the leaven pervades the mass in which it is hidden. They appeared not as the veins penetrate the marble, but as the painter's color shades the whole.”

Another says, “My earliest recollections of Mr. Savage go back to the first years of his ministry in Bedford. The impression that he made on my young heart was that he was a powerful and pathetic preacher. He lodged his texts, subjects and

manner firmly in my memory. In the revivals of thirty years ago I remember him as one of the most active of laborers. He never seemed more at home and joyous than in the inquiry room. So earnest, affectionate and persuasive was he that he drew all our hearts towards himself and his Saviour."

A writer in the *Boston Recorder*, soon after his death, says of him: "His pulpit efforts were often signally felicitous, and not a few will remember—after the General Association of 1864, at Manchester, had voted to offer special thanks for converting grace vouchsafed to the congregation—how in prayer he took the great assembly up bodily to the gates of heaven, so that we could almost hear the songs of joy resounding within."

Mr. Savage was especially remarkable for those bursts of extemporaneous eloquence by which he often carried his audience at his will. These occasions were frequent at the communion table and in the religious meetings of ecclesiastical bodies. In the pulpit, also, it was not unusual for him to rise with the grandeur of his theme, and breaking away from the fetters of his written notes, pour forth a torrent of oratory that swept away every barrier in the hearts of his hearers, and won the assent of their understanding to the truths he uttered.

In many of his discourses he was vividly descriptive, leaving the impress of the pictures he portrayed indelibly fixed in the memory of those who heard him. The writer met with a minister in the Assembly at Chicago, in 1872, who had heard Mr. Savage preach a sermon more than twelve years previous, but which had been so effectually lodged in his recollection that he was able to give a clear analysis of it, and to follow the preacher out in the general development of his theme.

He was a man of varied attainments in literature, having read extensively among classical as well as English authors, and often re-produced the results of his reading with the happiest effect, not only in his public discourses, but in his social intercourse with men. His fine culture as a scholar, his retentive memory, which enabled him to quote from authors almost at will, combined with elegance of diction, made him to excel in conversation, and his society was always delighted in by those who knew

him best. "Had he been ambitious," said one at his funeral, "he might have stood on the high places of New England."

The memory of Mr. Savage is most tenderly cherished by the congregation to whom he so long ministered. At the time of his dismissal they evinced their affectionate regard by placing in his hands a purse of \$1000, and after his death they erected to his memory a beautiful and appropriate monument. Many anecdotes are related of him, illustrative of his genial kindness and the never-failing politeness which marked all his intercourse with the world, but the writer has yet to hear the first word that would cast a shadow upon the lustre of his name.

REV. ARTHUR LITTLE was installed pastor of the church on the 3d of January, 1866, by the Presbytery of Londonderry. The late Dr. E. N. Kirk, of Boston, preached the sermon, and the Rev. Dr. C. W. Wallace, of Manchester, delivered the charge to the pastor.

Mr. Little was born in West Boscawen, N. H., May 24th, 1837. He fitted for college at Kimball Union Academy and graduated from Dartmouth, July, 1860. He studied one year at Andover, one year at Princeton; was ordained as chaplain, March 16th, 1863, by a Congregational Council, and spent about two and one-half years in the war as chaplain of the 1st Vermont Heavy Artillery.

Mr. Little speaks of his pastorate in Bedford as a most happy and pleasant one. He was highly esteemed and popular with the people of his charge, who were reluctant to part with him. During his pastorate a house was built to be used as a parsonage, by a society formed for the purpose.

On the 22d of September, 1868, Mr. Little was dismissed from his charge, and in October, 1869, was settled over the Congregational church at Fond Du Lac, Wis., where he still remains.

IRA C. TYSON was born in Whitmarsh, Montgomery county, Pennsylvania, on the 3d of March, 1830. Learned the printing business, and was engaged in the office of the *Germantown Telegraph* twelve years. Studied the languages under Prof. Withington, of the Germantown Academy, and entered Union



Theological Seminary, New York City, in 1859. Graduated in May, 1862. Ordained and installed pastor of the Presbyterian church, Hughsonville, Dutchess county, New York, October 6, 1862, by the Presbytery of North River. Dismissed in March, 1869. Installed pastor of the Presbyterian church, Bedford, N. H., May 9th, 1869, by the Presbytery of Londonderry. Rev. James B. Dunn, of Boston, preached the sermon, Rev. William House, of Londonderry, charged the pastor, and Rev. E. M. Kellogg charged the people.

The church has enjoyed two seasons of refreshing within the past two years, resulting in an accession to the membership of about 40 on profession of faith. A vestry, built as a memorial of the re-union between the two branches of the Presbyterian church, was dedicated on the 6th of January, 1872. A Young Men's Christian Association was organized in May, 1874, and in January, 1876, the church adopted the Rotary system of eldership, electing a full board of twelve elders, in three classes, to serve four years each. The present membership of the church is about 215, and the Sabbath-school is composed of over 300 members, adults and children. The Society is at present entirely free from debt, and its church edifice is in a good state of repair. In 1871 the envelope system for benevolent contributions was adopted, and is continued to the present time, (1876.)

The following is a summary of the ministry, eldership and church members :

From date of organization to present time, . . . . .	127 years.
Without a pastor from 1749 to 1757, . . . . .	8 "
Rev. John Houston, 1757-1778, . . . . .	21 "
Without a pastor from 1778 to 1804, . . . . .	26 "
Rev. David McGregore, 1804-1825, . . . . .	21 "
Rev. Thomas Savage, 1826-1866, . . . . .	40 "
Rev. Arthur Little, 1866-1868, . . . . .	2 "
Ira C. Tyson, 1869-1876, . . . . .	7 "

The following have served as elders, with the date of their ordination. In the early history of the church the elders were chosen in town meeting :

1757.	Daniel L. French.	
James Little,	1836.	
James Gilmore,	Daniel Mack.	
Benjamin Smith,	1847.	
William Moor.	James French,	
1786.	Phineas French.	
Silas Dole,	1859.	
James Wallace,	William B. Stevens.	
John Orr.	1865.	
1803.	Gardner Nevins,	
David M'Questen,	Charles Gage,	
John Craig,	E. P. Parkhurst.	
John Houston,	1867.	
Phineas Aiken,	Jesse Witherspoon,	
William Moor.	Stephen C. Damon.	
1804.	1876.	
John Holbrook.	Hugh R. French,	
1817.	Oliver R. Clark,	
Stephen Thurston,	Freeman R. French,	
John French,	Frederick Hodgman,	
John Orr Houston,	Nathan W. Cutler,	
Richard Dole,	Frederick F. French,	
Moody M. Stevens.	John Hodgman.	
1832.	Total,	38.
Thomas Atwood,		
Samuel McQuestion,		
At the settlement of Mr. McGregor, 1804, the number of names on the church roll was		112
Added during the pastorate of Mr. McGregor,		166
“ “ “ “ “ Mr. Savage,		457
“ “ “ “ “ Mr. Little,		22
“ “ “ present pastorate,		72
Making a total of		<u>829</u>

In common with other New England churches, this church has suffered much from depletion of its numbers, caused by re-

movals to the West, and concentration in the larger towns and cities of the State. This constant drain upon its forces has been one of the most serious obstacles to its growth. It is, however, a source of gratitude to God that the church has thus become a source of supply to other places, and that many of those who have gone out from it have made their mark in the world, and reflected honor upon the place that gave them birth. Many have gone out to preach the Gospel, several have become missionaries, and large numbers have filled prominent places of trust in the land, or acted creditably their part in the common walks of life.

Of those who have gone out from the church to preach the Gospel in other places may be mentioned the names of Rev. Messrs. Joseph Goffe, John Walker, Silas Aiken, Isaac Orr, C. W. Wallace, Daniel L. French, Lemuel Spofford, Ebenezer Chase, Moody A. Stevens, Albert Newton. Of those who have married ministers are : Mrs. Philomela Garret, previously second wife of Samuel Newell, late missionary in India ; Mrs. Jane Harris, Mrs. Mary J. Smith, Mrs. Ann Worcester, Mrs. Mary Moor, Mrs. Harriet M. G. Wood, Mrs. Dolly Bryant (also the wife of a missionary) ; Mrs. Nancy French, Mrs. Polly French, Mrs. Sally Chapin, Mrs. Mary Miltimore, Mrs. Lucretia Clelan, Mrs. Fanny P. House. The last two were daughters of Mr. Savage.

The church has always manifested a missionary spirit, contributing some years from four to five hundred dollars to benevolent objects, and a monthly concert of prayer for missions is observed, which has been sustained for many years, and is one of the permanent institutions of the church.

From their earliest history the people have been distinguished for their church-going habits, and for their general attachment to the services of the sanctuary. As already remarked, in their earlier history, being without preaching at home, they were accustomed to go to Londonderry to Divine service, performing the journey often on foot—a distance of twelve miles. In times of religious interest it has been the custom to hold two and three meetings during the day, to attend which, the daily

business of life has been cheerfully set aside. The Sabbath services are always well attended, as is generally the case with the Thursday afternoon prayer-meeting.

Although in the lapse of time there have been many changes in the ecclesiastical complexion of the people, the older Presbyterians removing and persons of other denominational preferences taking their places, the church has always remained distinctively Presbyterian. This is the more noticeable from the fact that a large proportion of the churches of the State, which were at one time Presbyterian, have changed their ecclesiastical relations, becoming Congregational. There was nothing to have hindered Bedford church from doing likewise, except its loyalty to that form of church government adopted by the fathers, who inaugurated a church polity which they believed in discipline to tend most to their edification. It is hoped the same spirit will animate the church in future, and that they will account it honorable to be identified with the great Presbyterian family, whose doctrinal system, church polity and aggressive vigor, point to it as the church of the future, which, under God, is to grapple most successfully with the forces of infidelity. There certainly appears no desire at present to disturb our ecclesiastical relations.

A church which traces its history back to colonial days, which struggled with the country through the dark years of the revolution, which has grown with the nation to the present day, and still maintains the institutions of religion intact, which during a period of 127 years has had but five settled ministers, whose united pastorates extend over a period of 91 years, and which, notwithstanding the many trials through which it has passed is still strong and prosperous, has certainly occasion, during this year of national jubilee, to thank God for His preserving mercy, and for the distinguished blessings with which it has been visited. Recognizing His good hand in its past history, especially in those seasons of refreshing, which have come, at times, as "streams in the desert," restoring its wasted energies, and imparting new life and activity to those of its ministry and membership who were fainting by the way, the church enters upon

the new century of the nation with renewed hope and confidence in its covenant-keeping God, and with new purpose of activity in the Saviour's cause.

As we look back over the past to-day, while we see so many reasons to thank God for his goodness, there is also cause for humiliation that many responsibilities have been neglected, and many opportunities of usefulness unimproved. May we not hope, that with the continued help of our Great Head, the church from this time forth will enter upon a new era of usefulness ; and that we may be able, by the grace of God, to make a record for the church, in which succeeding generations will rejoice and glorify God thereby? That the facts here recorded may serve as a stimulus to greater endeavor, is the improvement we should desire to make of them.



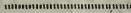
CENTENNIAL  
HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

BEDFORD, N. H.,

DELIVERED SABBATH, JULY 2, 1876, BY THE PASTOR,  
REV. IRA C. TYSON.



PREPARED BY DIRECTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED  
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MANCHESTER:

JOHN B. CLARKE'S STEAM BOOK AND JOB PRESS.

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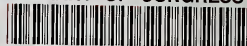


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